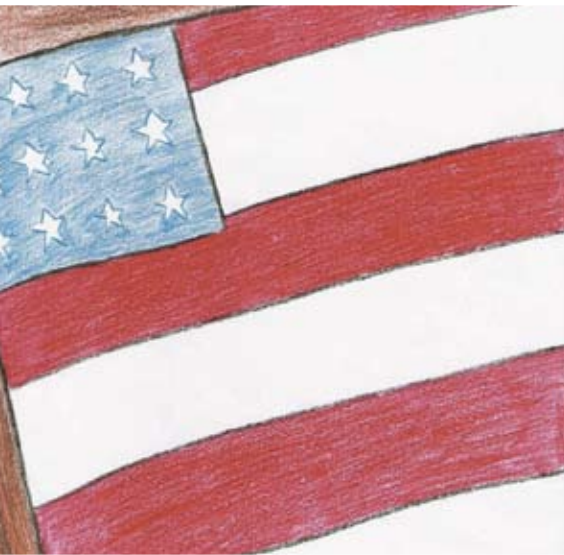


Smart Options: Investing the Recovery Funds for Student Success



April 2009

SMART OPTIONS: INVESTING THE RECOVERY FUNDS FOR STUDENT SUCCESS

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Resist the Status Quo

“Many states and school systems will want to claim federal money while preserving the disastrous status quo. Mr. Duncan will need to resist those pressures while pushing the country toward the educational reforms it desperately needs.”

— *The New York Times* editorial, April 9, 2009

BY JANUARY 2012 ...

The federal government’s unprecedented \$100 billion investment in our nation’s public schools through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) offers a once-in-a-generation opportunity to transform public education.

We believe that states and districts must use these funds to act smartly and with focus to set the groundwork for real student improvement for decades to come — preparing many more young people to graduate high school ready for college and careers.

The pressure will be to save jobs and preserve the status quo with little real change for our nation’s students. We hope that state and school district leaders will have the wisdom and courage to focus these resources on investments that will have a payoff — both in the short-term and over time — so that this unprecedented investment in public education will enable our nation’s schools to better prepare our students for college, work, and life.

This paper lays out five big ideas for investing the one-time recovery funds that, if seized, will enable parents, educators, taxpayers, and students to see real educational results by 2012 and provide the base for more dramatic improvements in the future. If states and districts focus their funds on these ideas, we believe that it will be a down payment on excellence that lays the groundwork to produce breakthrough gains in what our students learn and achieve for the next generation.

First, and most fundamental, by January 2012 Americans should expect to see a common core of fewer, clearer, higher, evidence-based, college- and career-ready standards adopted by at least 40 states representing the majority of the nation’s students. These academic content standards, benchmarked internationally to the best in the world and linked to common, higher-quality assessments of student progress, will provide a foundation of clear goals and priorities to help teachers teach and students learn. The time for action is now. Our children deserve the chance to thrive in an increasingly interdependent world.

In addition, by 2012, Americans should expect to see:

- **More robust and user-friendly data and information systems in every state, district, school, and classroom that provide students, parents, teachers, principals, and district and state leaders timely information to**

The First Question

“The first question, ... I promise you, will be what did you do with the stabilization money to drive reform and improve achievement? If there isn’t a good answer to that, they might as well just tear up the form.”

— Arne Duncan, discussing Race to the Top applications with *Education Week*, April 7, 2009

know what’s working, what’s not, and what additional help students need. By using new federal dollars to build robust data systems and train educational leaders in how to use the information, our schools will help principals and teachers improve student achievement and ensure tax dollars are used most effectively.

- **A meaningful professional teacher evaluation system in every state and school district that shines the spotlight on teacher effectiveness and provides support to help teachers improve by providing clear, differentiated feedback.** Such evaluations, combined with the new data systems, will help districts focus efforts to retain the most effective teachers, target training and support for those who need it, and ensure the timely dismissal of teachers whose practice still does not meet the bar even after they receive help.
- **A rigorous and focused effort in every state to close and turn around 5 percent of its poorest-performing schools.** By 2012, states and districts should have shut down at least 500 of these schools and replaced them with new, higher-performing schools that have much higher expectations for students and the operational and staffing flexibility to effectively meet their students’ needs. Furthermore, every state will have a clear mechanism that it is using to aggressively close its lowest-performing 5 percent of schools and replace them with higher-performing, new schools including public charter schools.
- **Additional targeted interventions provided to the students who are at least two years behind academically in reading, writing, and mathematics.** A longer school day and year, having the most effective teachers teach these students, and similar interventions will accelerate their learning dramatically and help bring them up to grade level.

With transformative but affordable changes such as these, Americans should begin to see gains in student performance in the next two years, including fewer dropouts, a higher percentage of students graduating high school ready for college and work, more students performing on grade level, a narrowed achievement gap, and more students moved from failing schools into schools where they have a real chance to thrive.

Getting there will require *changing structures and incentives* to encourage people to try new approaches, *changing routines* so that people do not want to return to “business as usual,” and *changing results* so that people can see for themselves that the changes are worth making and are improving outcomes for

Ask Yourself ...

When deciding how to best use ARRA dollars, consider the following questions:

Short- and long-term impact:

Is the strategy likely to improve student learning and operational effectiveness (improved technology, timely and useful data, more effective HR departments, etc.) both in the first two years and beyond?

Fiscal soundness:

Can all the funds be spent effectively in the next two years? How will you sustain the effort after these one-time funds end?

Catalyst:

Can this strategy be used as a lever for additional changes or to break down barriers that have stood in the way of student progress?

students. Business as usual must yield to approaches that the research shows make a measurable difference for children.

It's the difference between a once-in-a-generation opportunity seized and a once-in-a-generation opportunity squandered.

Focus, focus, focus

Transformation of this magnitude requires states and districts to maintain a laser-like focus on implementing a handful of the highest-leverage strategies, whether they are using recovery funds to supplement their budgets or mitigate their deficits. Just as important, they must resist the temptation to respond in some way to all of the fragmented spending requests that already are piling up. A little bit here, a little bit there will not produce the results that children deserve and the public expects. As the saying goes, *anything* is possible, but *everything* is not. Leaders need to stay focused on those priorities that promise the greatest return on this unprecedented investment.

In doing so, state and district leaders must find the right balance between short- and long-term gains. Critical, one-time investments that put in place new processes, systems, and changes in practice can have a powerful long-term impact. But many of these investments may be less visible to policymakers, parents, and the public: new and better IT systems that assist in getting the information to principals, teachers, parents, and students to use in a timely way; better ways of evaluating, rewarding, and training teachers; more rigorous academic content standards and challenging tests; a fresh start for students in long-failing schools; and intensive support for students who struggle the most to meet those high standards. We believe, though, that these investments also can demonstrate short-term results for students. The recommendations in this guide are designed to strike a balance, realizing tangible initial benefits while transforming future outcomes for all students.

Start now with the tools you have

State and district leaders also cannot afford to let the perfect be the enemy of the good. Even if most states and districts do not and will not have *all* the excellent staff they want, they should have sufficient resources to implement our recommendations in the next two years. Even if the teacher evaluation systems that are used are not perfect, we know there are ways better than the status quo to identify a school's best instructors now that will become even

Investments To Avoid

In addition to acting proactively on the five priorities described in this document, we encourage states and districts to avoid focusing on efforts that either are:

Not needed, such as efforts by individual states to rewrite standards and tests in isolation

or

Not cost effective in improving student achievement according to research, such as:

- Broad-based class size reductions not tied to specific student achievement outcome goals
- Salary increases for teachers who earn a master's degree, not tied to demonstrable student outcomes or high-need areas such as mathematics or science
- Business-as-usual professional development workshops, not tied to student needs or outcomes
- New school construction that creates a new building but leaves the instructional program unchanged

more precise after two years of collective effort. Even if not all states have sufficiently robust data systems to answer every relevant question, there is no reason why they cannot start immediately to share what they know with educators, policymakers, parents, and the public and to accelerate investments that will provide better and more actionable information in the future. Organizations such as the Data Quality Campaign are experienced in this area and can provide clear guidance and technical support on what is needed.

For its \$100 billion investment, the public rightly expects focused actions and tangible progress in the next two years, not more of the same. The vast majority of the ARRA funds provide great flexibility to pursue these ideas. For other funds with existing restrictions, we encourage states and districts to think creatively and work closely with the U.S. Department of Education and their funding guidelines in the execution of their plans. (The appendix describes the primary ARRA funding streams.)

The following pages provide additional detail on how states and districts can work together, and with the federal government, nonprofits, and the private sector, to deliver on this promise. These recommendations were developed following a convening of more than 30 K–12 education leaders, including state and district superintendents, sponsored by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and The Eli and Edythe Broad Foundation. Although the meeting did not strive for consensus and not everyone agreed with every word, the five big ideas that follow represent the best thinking that emerged, based on the participants' decades of collective expertise.

PRIORITIES FOR ACTION

What governors and state chiefs should do

Standards

- Join the multistate consortium to develop common world-class standards and assessments. Do not waste resources trying to do this work independently.

Data and Information

- Dramatically accelerate the work to embed all 10 elements of the Data Quality Campaign into the state's data system, including linking teacher data to student performance data.
- Link K–12 systems with early learning and postsecondary systems.
- Align data definitions and design specifications with national standards.
- Ensure educators, policymakers, and parents are using the data to drive key decisions.

Teacher Evaluations

- Require district-level teacher evaluations to meet minimum standards.
- Require districts to report the distribution of teachers across each ratings category.
- Require that tenure and retention decisions be tied to evaluations.
- Coordinate cross-district training of principals and other school leaders in conducting and using high-quality teacher evaluations.
- Use the evaluation system to identify the most and least effective teachers.
- Provide incentives for the most effective teachers to teach in the schools where students need them most.

Turnaround Schools

- Begin to aggressively close the lowest-performing schools and replace them with new, high-performing schools.
- Change the conditions to help the new turnaround schools best serve students — combining autonomy with accountability.
- Create options for successful innovation, such as local “Turnaround Zones,” a statewide “Governor’s District,” or mayoral accountability.
- Eliminate statewide caps and reduce barriers for public charter schools and other successful providers.

- Be transparent with results.

Struggling Students

- Expand learning opportunities for our highest-need students through a longer school day and year.
- Create a “9th grade teaching corps” that provides significant financial incentives to the most effective teachers to work in 9th grade in Title I schools.
- Provide incentives for effective teachers to teach in high-need schools.
- Use Open Educational Resources (OER) to create alternative pathways for students who are behind academically or have special needs.

What district superintendents should do

Standards

- Provide teachers with tools to translate current standards into engaging instruction.
- Offer more high-level courses to more students.

Data and Information

- Develop and link formative, interim, and benchmark assessment data with human resources information.
- Develop the capacity to understand school-based instructional spending and how it relates to school and student performance gains.
- Develop a robust personnel and performance management system to better allocate staff and resources to maximize student achievement.

Teacher Evaluations

- Create fairer, more accurate, and more useful teacher evaluations systems, developed with teachers and their unions.
- Reform their district’s transfer and seniority policies.
- Create a meaningful “baseline” of teacher performance.
- Train teachers, unions, and school leaders in the new system.
- Revamp professional development based on the new evaluations.

Turnaround Schools

- Close the lowest-performing schools and work with partners to apply for waivers to open new ones.
- Open new high-performing schools in impacted neighborhoods with maximum flexibility, accountability, and transparency.

- Provide the necessary resources to launch the new schools (facilities, transition funding, all funds following the student, etc.).

Struggling Students

- Create a “learning stabilization” program that puts effective teachers in front of the lowest-performing students for more time.
- Expand learning opportunities for our highest-need students through a longer school day and year.
- Create a “9th grade teaching corps” to encourage the most effective teachers to work in 9th grade in Title I schools.
- Increase the stability of the learning environment for the neediest students by reforming seniority and transfer rules.
- Create more flexible credit-recovery programs.
- Determine what works best and build on those successes.

PRIORITY 1: DEVELOP COMMON AMERICAN STANDARDS

The big idea

By January 2012, American students should benefit from a common core of fewer, clearer, higher academic content standards in reading, writing, and mathematics, which prepare them for college and careers. These content standards will be internationally benchmarked and based on evidence of the skills and knowledge students actually need to succeed in college and careers, not just what we think they need. And they will have been adopted by at least 40 states representing the majority of the nation's students.

United States Is Slipping Internationally

25th Ranking of U.S. 15-year-olds in mathematics (2006)

21st Ranking of U.S. 15-year-olds in mathematics and science (2006)

14th College AND university graduation rate (2006; tied for first in 1995)

Why action is essential

Today, academic content standards for what students need to know — articulated through course requirements, high school graduation requirements, and state exit/course exams — rarely translate into readiness to succeed beyond high school. Studies show that college professors and employers often have different views than high school teachers about what content and skills to emphasize to prepare students for both postsecondary work and future employment.

While every state has adopted standards for what students should know and be able to do, the process by which standards are developed frequently encourages breadth over depth and rigor. As a result, American education standards are a mishmash of topics that try to cover far more material than teachers can ever hope to deliver while giving students only a shallow understanding of complex topics. Teachers and students alike are

Learning from the Best

“Around the globe, governments are eagerly comparing their educational outcomes to the best in the world. The goal is not just to see how they rank, but rather to identify and learn from top performers and rapid improvers — from nations and states that offer ideas for boosting their own performance. This process, known as ‘international benchmarking,’ has become a critical tool for governments striving to create world-class education systems.”

— *Benchmarking for Success: Ensuring U.S. Students Receive a World-Class Education*, National Governors Association, Council of Chief State School Officers, Achieve, summer 2009

Stop Low-Balling

“I am calling on states that are setting their standards far below where they ought to be to stop low-balling expectations for our kids. The solution to low test scores is not lower standards — it’s tougher, clearer standards. ...”

— President Barack Obama, Remarks to the United States Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, March 10, 2009

overwhelmed by standards that are sometimes reasonable but often excessive. Without any guidance, teachers are forced to make their own decisions about what to teach or fall back on the standardized tests administered by states, which are of uneven quality and rigor.

According to Bill Schmidt, a Michigan State University researcher and expert on international benchmarking, standards in the highest-performing nations are:

More focused. For decades, experts have expressed concerns that state standards tend to be “a mile wide and an inch deep.” By contrast, world-class content standards cover a smaller number of topics in greater depth at every grade level, so that students can master the core concepts before being promoted.

More rigorous. The curriculum studied by the typical American 8th grader is two full years behind the curriculum being studied by 8th graders in high-performing countries. While most American 8th graders are still learning arithmetic, their peers in high-performing countries have moved on to algebra and geometry. In science, American 8th graders are memorizing the parts of the eye, while students in top-performing nations are learning about how the eye actually works by capturing photons that are translated into images by the brain.

More coherent. Too many state standards resemble a “laundry list” of topics often covered in multiple grades. By contrast, mathematics and science standards in top-performing countries lay out an orderly progression of topics that follow the logic of the discipline, allowing deep content coverage. “In the United States the principle that seems to guide our curriculum development is that you teach everything everywhere,” says Schmidt, “because then somehow somebody will learn something somewhere.”

Finally, there is the fundamental unfairness for students. It’s not fair that we set very different expectations for a student in Mississippi and a student in Massachusetts. Moreover, the patchwork of different state standards is a tremendous barrier to improving education across the country. It’s hard to assess what truly works in education when all states use different yardsticks. And it makes no sense for all 50 states to develop their own content standards and assessments, which costs more for taxpayers and has created incentives for some states to lower their standards.

It's Already Happening

Massachusetts and Minnesota benchmarked their mathematics and science expectations against some of the best in the world by participating in the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) assessment in 2007, a collaborative effort that compared performance across 37 nations in grade 4 and 48 nations in grade 8.

States participating in the American Diploma Project (ADP), a multistate effort to develop college- and career-ready standards, have discovered that as they set standards based on evidence and international benchmarks, their expectations are converging. A July 2008 report from Achieve found a remarkable degree of consistency in English and mathematics requirements across 16 ADP states.

What governors and state chiefs should do

States are poorly positioned to remedy these shortfalls individually, and it is important to understand what states and districts should NOT do. States should *not* use recovery funds to revamp their academic content standards independently. States should *not* make major individual investments in new tests and assessment systems based on their existing academic content standards, except perhaps for targeted efforts to improve the effectiveness of these tests for English language learners and students with disabilities. Fortunately, there are indeed things states should do collectively.

States have begun to work through the multistate consortium to address the need for fewer, clearer, higher standards. For example, Achieve first anchored high school exit standards in the demands of college and work. That idea was embraced by 35 states that joined the American Diploma Project to begin to align their standards and assessments. From that insight and the collective work of states, the Council of Chief State School Officers and the National Governors Association's Center for Best Practices have convened a partnership to take these efforts to the next level — a true, evidence-based common core. The Common Core State Standards Initiative will rigorously review the evidence base of Achieve, ACT, and the College Board and then, with a validation process where states and interested parties will bring their evidence to the table, will create a common core of standards in reading, writing, and mathematics that truly represent what is necessary for students to be prepared for college and work.

Once reading, writing, and mathematics are completed, the consortium should turn its attention to science and history/social science. We envision that once the common core standards are established, states will work together to develop a set of rigorous and fair assessments that they can share.

State participation in the resulting common standards and high-quality assessments will be voluntary, so it will be important for state education leaders to communicate the benefits to students, parents, and educators in their states as they join in this Race to the Top.

Benchmarking Is ...

“Benchmarking is the practice of being humble enough to admit that someone else has a better process and wise enough to learn how to match or even surpass them.”

— The American Productivity and Quality Center

What district superintendents should do

In the meantime, while the multistate consortium is developing world-class standards and assessments, districts (preferably with state support) should use stimulus funds to:

- **Provide teachers with the tools they need to translate the current standards into engaging instruction.** A common complaint in virtually every school district in the country is that the standards have not made their way into classrooms. The remedy: quality formative assessments, curriculum frameworks, model lesson plans, annotated student work, and other tangible tools — all aligned to the standards — that will help more teachers have success “teaching to the standards.”
- **Provide more high-level courses to more students.** Examples include algebra for 8th graders (a gateway course to the higher-level mathematics that leads to greater high school and college success) and Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, dual enrollment, and similar courses that give high school students a head start on postsecondary success. Several districts have successfully used these approaches to accelerate their students’ learning.

The benefits

This voluntary state effort will produce a set of clear, consistent, rigorous standards that focus on the most important content in these core subjects: reading, writing, and mathematics.

American students will be given a fair chance to succeed without being constrained by low expectations that demand too little.

Teachers will be able to focus their teaching on what matters most instead of having to cover everything.

Policymakers will be able to direct their resources toward developing tools that help teachers foster student learning rather than duplicating efforts to develop and refine 50 sets of similar state standards and tests. Especially when funds are scarce, it makes sense for states to work together to lower their overall costs and target funds to other uses.

Parents in every state will know that their children will be held to the same high expectations in the core subjects of reading, writing, and mathematics, no matter which school they attend.

PRIORITY 2: PROVIDE DATA AND INFORMATION THAT EDUCATORS, POLICYMAKERS, AND PARENTS CAN USE

The big idea

By January 2012, every state should be monitoring the progress of individual students from early learning through postsecondary education. They also should be producing regular, timely, and accurate reports that appropriately share such data with those who need it most — teachers, administrators, parents, and policymakers — and connect such data with spending information so they can tell if taxpayer money is making a difference for students in the classroom. Good data enable us to track how well we are preparing students for college and careers, allow teachers to adjust their instruction, offer the transparency needed for good decisionmaking at all levels, and help create the momentum for moving forward.

Why action is essential

Without timely and useful information about how students are performing, everyone is flying blind. Neither students nor their parents have an accurate picture of students' academic strengths and weaknesses. Teachers do not know exactly where to target additional instructional assistance. Administrators do not know if there is a school- or district-wide problem that needs their attention or an effective practice that could be spread more broadly. And policymakers cannot know where their spending is having the most impact. Timely access to actionable information makes it possible to move forward effectively in every other critical area: strengthening standards and tests, improving teacher effectiveness, transforming failing schools, and offering intensive supports to struggling students.

When the Data Quality Campaign (DQC) began helping states build longitudinal data systems in 2005, no state had all 10 essential elements recommended by the DQC in place; these include having a unique identifier for each student to track year-to-year performance over time, student-level transcript information, and student-level college-readiness test scores (SAT, ACT, etc.). By 2008, six

With Good Data, You Can ...

Measure student gains more accurately

Signal when students need extra help

Pay teachers more fairly

Allocate resources more effectively

Measure programs' return on investment

Identify and share best practices

Build public understanding

It's Already Happening

Minnesota has connected its K–12 and postsecondary data systems, while Connecticut agencies are sharing data on education, training, and employment.

Louisiana's Dropout Early Warning System tracks indicators such as attendance, grade point average, discipline data, and student age so that schools can work to keep at-risk students in school and increase the chances that they will graduate.

Arkansas's Web-based reporting system provides teachers; counselors; and school, district, and state administrators with a unique account that requires authentication when signing on to the system and determines which reports — student, classroom, grade, or school level — he or she can access. The state is now working on providing access to parents and students as well.

The Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education shares reports with high schools to show how their graduates perform in college.

— *The Next Step*, Data Quality Campaign, March 2009

states had all 10 elements, and 48 had five or more in place. Within the next three years, 47 states plan to have eight or more data elements and should be able to use them to answer key questions that many cannot answer today. These include questions such as: What percentage of students are graduating high school on time? Do all students have equitable access to Advanced Placement and college-preparatory courses? Are our best teachers teaching where they are needed most? What percentage of high school graduates enroll in college and complete a college degree? What percentage of students enter college not needing remediation?

What governors and state chiefs should do

The top priorities for states are to finish building out their data systems and make sure the information actually is accessible, actionable, and useful to policymakers, state and district superintendents, principals, teachers, and parents. In particular, states should:

- **Link teacher data to student performance data.** We need to be able to answer questions such as: Which teacher preparation programs are producing the most effective teachers? And how does teacher effectiveness compare in high-poverty and low-poverty schools?
- **Link K–12 data systems with early learning and postsecondary education.** We need to know how well prepared students are when they enter kindergarten and how well they perform after entering college or the workforce.
- **Align data definitions and design specifications with those set nationally.** Standard data definitions and design specifications would reduce data collection and reporting costs, improve the accuracy and commonality of data across districts and states, and create more timely information that can reach the right user at the right time. A few states, such as Florida and Louisiana, are far ahead of others in terms of the quality of their data systems, and it makes no sense for every state to reinvent the wheel.
- **Make sure educators, policymakers, and parents know how to use the data and that the data are used to drive key decisions.** Building the systems is only the first step. Principals, teachers, and students must have actionable, real-time information to adjust instruction for students before it is too late and to better target resources so that more students graduate ready for college and careers. At a minimum, this will require

Managing with Data

“[Managing with data] ... requires tracking an array of indicators, including the shipment and distribution of books and materials and the satisfaction of teachers with the results; the speed at which maintenance workers address school-level concerns; the percentage of teachers who rate the professional development they receive as helpful; and turnaround time on assessment data and the frequency with which those data are employed by teachers. A school system which has these kinds of data is one where management is equipped to revolutionize how schools work, how teachers are supported, and how dollars are spent.”

— *Balanced Scorecards and Management Data*,
Center for Education
Policy Research,
Harvard University

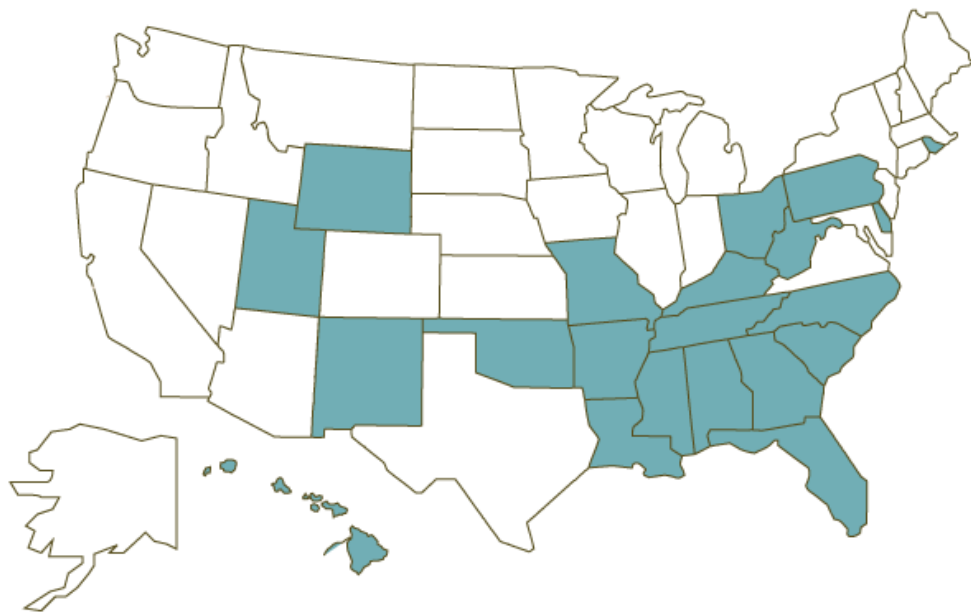
states to share the information on the Web and train people how to make using it part of their routines.

What district superintendents should do

For districts that are prepared to move beyond simply having the DQC’s 10 elements and want to *actively use* data to manage their performance, they also should:

- **Develop local data systems with formative, interim, and benchmark assessment data, which are linked to human resources information.** This will provide districts with “real-time” information about which professional development investments are helping to improve student achievement. School districts in Long Beach (CA), Garden Grove (CA), and Aldine (TX) have outstanding data systems in place that could quickly and efficiently be adopted by others.
- **Develop the capacity to understand school-based instructional spending and how it relates to school and student performance gains.** This will provide useful insights into whether schools, teachers, and students are served equitably within districts and the cost-effectiveness of district programs.
- **Develop a robust personnel and performance management system.** Accurate, up-to-date data will show which teachers received what professional development when and track their professional growth history. For districts that want to better manage their investments in teacher effectiveness, such a system is essential. Again, results depend on staff training and routine usage.
- **Seize opportunities to leverage other systems.** Rather than trying to build such systems independently, districts should work with states to identify opportunities to work collaboratively and save money, particularly with the rise of more flexible Web-based systems and open-source software solutions.

21 States Can Match Teacher Performance Data with Student Performance Data



Source: Data Quality Campaign

The benefits

The benefits to stakeholders for districts and states that go beyond the 10 essential elements and put in place robust data, information, and management systems are many.

Parents will know in real time whether their child is on track to graduate from high school prepared for college and career success and how they can help.

Teachers will know whether each and every student is on track for college or careers and, if not, how they can more appropriately tailor their instruction for individual students.

Principals will be able to perform more accurate evaluations and customize teachers' professional development plans accordingly. As important, when a new student arrives at a school, principals and teachers will know his/her educational history.

Districts will know where their best teachers are, where they came from and where they go, and which investments make the most difference for students. With this information, they can better pinpoint what successful schools are doing differently.

Policymakers will be able to measure the effectiveness of teachers and schools, using growth in student achievement in addition to absolute proficiency measures.

And the public will know how their local schools are doing, whether their graduates are prepared for college and careers, and whether investments and improvement strategies are making a difference.

PRIORITY 3: CONDUCT MEANINGFUL TEACHER EVALUATIONS

The big idea

By January 2012, every state and school district will have a meaningful teacher evaluation system that can provide differentiated supports and rewards to teachers based on their performance, with at least 50 percent of teacher ratings based on how much teachers contribute to students' academic progress over time.

Why action is essential

Teachers matter more for student learning than anything else schools do. And a meaningful teacher evaluation system is the bedrock of a strong, continuously improving teaching corps. Today, virtually all teachers receive some form of evaluation. But in practice, nearly 100 percent of them earn “satisfactory” ratings after minimal observation, and teachers rarely receive useful and timely feedback about what they can do to improve. As a result, the evaluations are largely meaningless. A January 2008 report by the Washington, DC-based Education Sector concluded: “A host of factors ... have resulted in teacher evaluation systems throughout public education that are superficial, capricious, and often don’t even directly address the quality of instruction, much less measure students’ learning.”

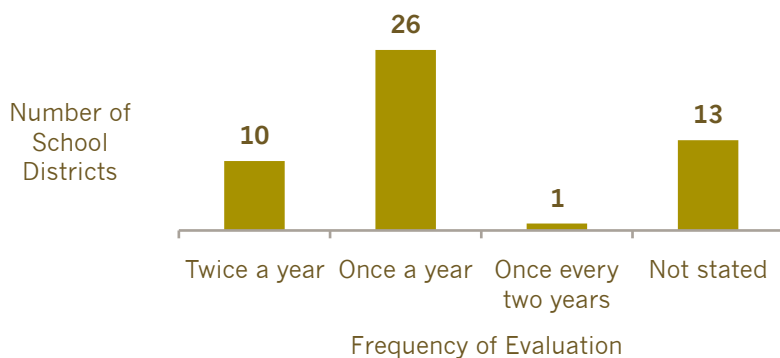
An important first step toward supporting teachers’ growth and development and ensuring all students have access to high-quality instruction is to develop fairer, more accurate, and more useful measures of teacher effectiveness that can be agreed to by teachers, school system leaders, and researchers.

Tenure’s Impact

“Currently, tenure policies do not play a role in ensuring that all students have access to effective teachers. Rather, they reinforce the chances that students in high-poverty schools will be assigned chronically ineffective teachers.”

— *Teacher Turnover, Tenure Policies, and the Distribution of Teacher Quality: Can High-Poverty Schools Catch a Break?* Center for American Progress, December 2008

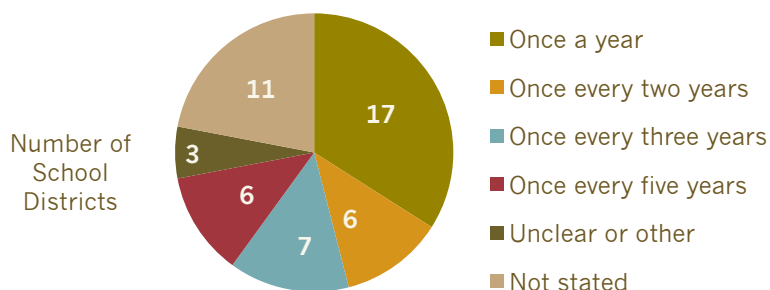
Evaluation Requirements of Untenured Teachers in the 50 Largest U.S. School Systems*



*As required by collective-bargaining contracts.

Source: Education Sector analysis of data from the National Council on Teacher Quality, "Teacher Rules, Roles and Rights," www.nctq.org/cb/

Evaluation Requirements of Tenured Teachers in the 50 Largest U.S. School Systems*



*As required by collective-bargaining contracts.

Source: Education Sector analysis of data from the National Council on Teacher Quality, "Teacher Rules, Roles and Rights," www.nctq.org/cb/

What governors and state chiefs should do

States should focus on creating the architecture to support meaningful teacher evaluations but leave it to districts and school leaders to ultimately evaluate teachers. Specifically, states should:

- **Require district-level teacher evaluations to meet minimum standards.** This should include basing the majority of teachers' evaluations on

It's Already Happening

A report from the nonprofit Education Sector finds that a few school systems and programs are using Charlotte Danielson's system of teaching standards and rubrics, or others like it, to more objectively measure teacher effectiveness. Among them:

– The Teacher Advancement Program (in 180 schools with 60,000 students);

– Connecticut's Beginning Educator Support and Training Program;

– The Cincinnati and Toledo, OH, teacher evaluation models; and

– The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, which offers advanced certification to experienced teachers on a voluntary basis.

— *Rush to Judgment: Teacher Evaluation in Public Education*, Education Sector, January 2008

student learning gains over time, identifying a rubric of effective teaching practices, and providing teachers with more fine-grained feedback than “satisfactory” or “unsatisfactory.”

- **Require districts to report the distribution of teachers across each ratings category.**
- **Require that tenure and retention decisions be tied to performance evaluations.**
- **Coordinate cross-district training of principals and other school leaders in how to conduct and use high-quality teacher evaluations.**
- **Use the system to identify the most and least effective teachers.** The top performers should serve as models and be compensated accordingly, while the bottom performers should receive targeted help. While current evaluation systems often place as many as 95 percent of teachers at the same performance level, the new systems should provide more differentiation, perhaps up to 20 percent of teachers at each level.
- **Provide incentives for the most effective teachers to teach in the schools where students need them most.**

What district superintendents should do

- **Districts must create fairer, more accurate, and more useful teacher evaluation systems, developed with teachers and their unions.** The evaluations should comprise four elements: a description of what good teaching looks like (codified in an evaluation “instrument”), a measure of how much the teacher has contributed to student learning over time, a regular evaluation process during which teachers are observed and receive specific advice about what to improve and how, and meaningful follow-up in the form of targeted professional development and support. An accurate and useful evaluation system can provide the foundation for promoting effective teachers, helping more teachers to improve, and dismissing teachers whose practice does not improve even with support. All teachers deserve the opportunity to receive meaningful, ongoing feedback so they can improve in their profession. The days of the once-a-year, quick classroom visit must end.
- **Reform their district's transfer and seniority policies.** Districts also can ensure that schools serving large proportions of low-income students and students of color have equitable access to effective teachers by working with their unions to protect these schools from being forced to hire

It's Already Happening

Chicago and Houston are among the districts that follow the principle of “mutual consent” in placing teachers, which means a teacher and school must both agree to a match in all cases. This has eliminated the process of “bumping,” in which senior teachers who have lost jobs at one school are “slotted” into a vacancy at another school, displacing a less senior teacher who may be more effective.

— The New Teacher Project

Charlotte-Mecklenburg (NC), one of the highest-performing urban systems in the country, now makes layoffs in Title I schools based on performance, not seniority.

— The New Teacher Project

teachers based solely on seniority or to accept teachers whom they don't want to transfer into the school.

- **Create a meaningful “baseline” of teacher performance.** An outside provider could evaluate a subsection of a district's teachers against a meaningful standard. Principals could participate in this review to learn how to conduct meaningful evaluations themselves.
- **Train teachers in the new system.** Strong communication with teachers, teachers unions, and school leaders is essential to reinforce that the primary purpose of the new evaluation approach is to support teachers' professional growth rather than to punish.
- **Revamp professional development.** Pay for “release time” for new teachers to focus on growth opportunities identified in the evaluations, and for “master teachers” to support them through individual coaching and classroom feedback.

Again, rather than trying to build such systems independently, states and districts should look for opportunities to collaborate and be more efficient in developing these new approaches to evaluation and training.

The benefits

Meaningful teacher evaluations will provide benefits at all levels of the K–12 public system. Students and parents will gain from the improved effectiveness of their teachers and can be more confident that truly ineffective teachers will not remain in the classroom.

Teachers will gain enormously from the targeted support and professional growth opportunities provided by such a system. They will be rewarded and compensated for excellence; districts can target their funds to pay their most effective teachers more. They will be supported to improve, based on a system that is fairer, more objective, and more transparent. Good teachers, more than anyone, want to work alongside equally committed and effective colleagues.

School leaders will benefit from having a systematic way of tracking and supporting each teacher and placing teachers where they are needed most across grades and classrooms.

Districts will gain new knowledge about how to recruit, develop, and reward talent and how to create incentives for their best teachers to remain in the profession and teach where they are needed most. States will benefit as the

overall teaching corps continuously improves. And the overall education system will benefit as meaningful teacher evaluations reinforce the effective use of data to improve instruction and guide decisionmaking.

PRIORITY 4: TURN AROUND LOW-PERFORMING SCHOOLS

The big idea

By January 2012, every state will have begun a more focused and rigorous effort to close and turn around 5 percent of its worst-performing schools. By 2012, at least 500 of these schools nationwide will have been replaced with new, higher-performing schools that have dramatically different conditions and governance structures. Every state also will have created a mechanism to close its lowest-performing 5 percent of schools and reopen them as places of real learning rather than despair. In addition, every state will have begun an effort to replicate its best schools, including eliminating caps and other barriers for high-performing public charter schools and making free facilities available to charter schools and other education providers with a demonstrated track record of success.

Why action is essential

President Obama and Secretary Duncan have made it a priority to turn around the lowest-performing schools as part of the recovery package. As they have so powerfully noted, nearly 5,000 schools (or about 5 percent of all U.S. public schools) are now in at least Program Improvement 5 status, meaning they have failed to meet even the minimum objectives for achievement and improvement over at least five years. We are not talking about schools that have failed to make Adequate Yearly Progress for one or two student groups in one or two grades or subjects. Rather, our focus is on schools that year after year have denied the vast majority of their most vulnerable students a fair shot at success. Continuing this level of neglect is morally unconscionable, and we must provide a new start for these students.

Under current law, schools in Program Improvement 5 status have been required to develop a corrective action plan with their district that is approved by the state. To date, the vast majority of districts and states have chosen the path of least resistance — instituting a new curriculum, bringing in outside experts, changing the principal, or developing a new program. But these minimal efforts have been far more about preserving the status quo than making the changes necessary to create meaningful opportunities for students.

The Turnaround Challenge

“Despite steadily increasing urgency about the nation’s lowest-performing schools — those in the bottom 5 percent — efforts to turn these schools around have largely failed. Marginal change has led to marginal (or no) improvement.”

— *The Turnaround Challenge*, Mass Insight Education & Research Institute, 2007

It's Already Happening

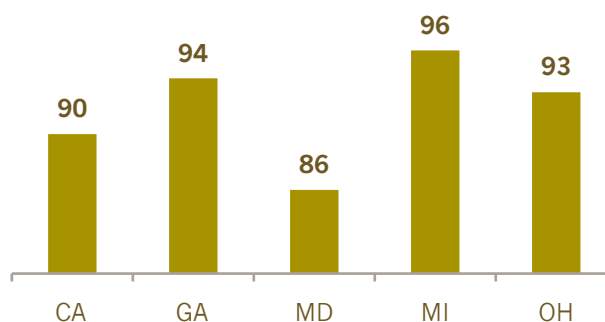
The Recovery School District (RSD) is a special school district administered by the Louisiana Department of Education. Created by legislation passed in 2003, the RSD is designed to take the state's lowest-performing schools and transform them into successful places for children to learn. Students in these schools benefit from an extended school day, a managed curriculum to ensure that students are taught to grade-level standards, and a sweeping classroom modernization program.

Initial results from the first set of RSD schools in New Orleans have been promising: 4th and 8th graders in the RSD schools posted bigger gains in several categories of state tests this past year than their peers statewide, a first for New Orleans students.

The children in these schools deserve much better. Moreover, the track record of high-performing schools serving high-poverty students, such as the Knowledge is Power Program (KIPP), Uncommon Schools, Yes Prep, Green Dot Public Schools, and Aspire, as well as other high-poverty/high-performing traditional public schools such as the Education Trust's "Dispelling the Myth" award-winners, demonstrate what is possible. The infusion of ARRA funds provides the chance to focus substantial resources to begin to dramatically transform these 5,000 schools — and, in the process, prove that all children can learn at high levels even under the most challenging conditions, with the right leadership, faculty, know-how, and culture.

States Opt for Easiest Restructuring Options

Percentage of schools choosing options other than replacing staff, contracting with outside organizations, reopening as a charter, or state takeover, 2006–07



*Percentages in Maryland and Ohio include non-Title I schools as well as Title I schools; these states require both types of schools to implement restructuring.

Source: Center on Education Policy

What governors and state chiefs should do

Bold, dramatic, comprehensive, immediate change is needed in these schools for these students. States need to:

- **Aggressively close poor-performing schools and replace them with new high-performing schools.** States must be much more proactive in this area by refusing to allow chronically underperforming schools to continue operating indefinitely. They should identify, close, and replace at least 10 schools in Program Improvement 5 status each year. Depending on the state, implementation may require coordination among the governor, state chief, and/or state board.

It's Already Happening

Chicago and New York City are among the big-city districts that have used mayoral control and strong accountability systems to drive needed changes.

New York, for instance, has closed more than 80 chronically low-performing schools and replaced them with more than 350 new small schools. As of the 2007–08 school year, all of the city's 1,500 schools have vastly expanded flexibility over staffing, budgets, and program.

Chicago is totally reconstituting eight of its worst schools, and 139 schools have varying levels of autonomy in exchange for greater accountability. Students in these schools are gaining academically at nearly twice the rate of the school system average.

- **Change the conditions to help the new turnaround schools best serve students — combining autonomy with accountability.** Use existing takeover laws to change the conditions under which the new schools operate. These replacement schools would either be public charter schools or other schools with the same level of flexibility, autonomy, and accountability. Specifically, local school leaders must have authority over who teaches in their building, how they spend resources, and how they structure the school day and year. This will require states to free these schools from the majority of state codes and restrictive provisions in union contracts. In return for this autonomy, states must hold these new schools accountable for results through transparent performance contracts that spell out expected student achievement gains. This level of transformation is fundamentally different from previous state takeovers, which changed governance but not the operating conditions of schools; this time, states need to change both by providing flexibility and holding people accountable for results.
- **Create options for successful innovation.** Invite school districts or high-performing public charter organizations to develop these new schools in local “Turnaround Zones.” In addition, consider creating a separate statewide “Governor’s District,” similar to the Recovery School District in Louisiana, to take over and transform the state’s lowest-performing schools. In cities with heavy concentrations of failed schools, states also may want to develop a contract with the mayor to assume management responsibility for the new schools. States could coordinate with other state agencies to focus efforts in these zones beyond education, including economic development, health, and law enforcement.
- **Eliminate statewide caps and reduce barriers.** Given the magnitude of the need, scale is essential. States should eliminate the barriers for proven high-quality school operators, including public charter schools. States should lift the cap on public charters, give them free access to facilities, and/or provide planning and transition funding for the new school. To help ensure a sufficient supply of well-qualified educators for these turnaround schools, states should expand high-quality, alternative certification efforts. Finally, states should provide financial and other incentives for the best operators to expand and serve more students. For instance, states could aggregate school improvement and other funds to encourage high-quality schools to replace the schools being closed.
- **Be transparent with results.** Identify and make publicly available the list of all schools that are in Program Improvement 5 status, as well as

It's Already Happening

In 2007, the Los Angeles Unified School District turned over Locke High School to Green Dot Public Schools in response to a petition by teachers. The charter school operator has since transformed the once-failing school into six small college preparatory schools. Although no test score and graduation data are yet available, the six new schools have seen significant improvements in discipline, attendance, and student engagement.

Overall, the city's 18 Green Dot schools have significantly outperformed state and local averages on measures such as high school graduation, the state's Academic Performance Index, and rankings among schools with comparable student demographics.

districts where at least one-third of their schools are in this category. Closely study the new schools' results over time, encourage the further expansion of successful models, and continue to close those that are not getting adequate results.

What district superintendents should do

Although states can and should take the lead in creating the conditions for new turnaround schools to operate, it will be up to local districts to take advantage of the increased flexibility.

- **Close the lowest-performing schools and apply for waivers to open new ones.** Districts must be proactive in closing the lowest-performing schools and seek to develop new, high-performing schools in their place. Districts should work with outside organizations to develop and operate new schools, including new charter schools to serve students in impacted neighborhoods. Several districts, including Chicago, New York City, and New Orleans, have created public/private partnerships with nonprofit organizations to help launch many successful new schools.
- **Ensure maximum flexibility, accountability, and transparency.** Ensure that the new schools have control over their staffing, budgets, and time. This may require revising local union agreements. To ensure accountability, districts should develop transparent performance contracts for schools in the Turnaround Zone and provide more complete pre- and post-test results of all their students. And they should publicly post results of both the low-performing schools as well as those that replace them.
- **Provide the necessary supports.** New schools operating in Turnaround Zones will require support from the central office to secure facilities, identify and support new leadership, clarify enrollment options for parents and students, revise funding allocations so that resources “follow the student,” provide transition funding, and facilitate the sharing of space among multiple schools in the same building. For instance, New York City has an Office of Portfolio Development and Chicago an Office of Autonomous Schools to handle functions such as these. Districts should consider aggregating a portion of the one-time recovery funds to help launch these new schools.

The benefits

Students will have high-quality educational choices, no longer stuck in schools that have demonstrably failed them for many years.

Teachers and principals will have professional work environments, freed of the red tape and bureaucratic rules that tend to stifle innovation and excellence.

States will have a structure and process for systematically closing their lowest-performing schools and opening new schools with a track record of success.

The very act of closing the worst schools and requiring new schools to prove the success of their models will send a strong signal that policymakers and state and district leaders are serious about accountability and results.

High-performing public charter schools will receive resources to expand and serve more students, as long as they continue to demonstrate strong student results.

PRIORITY 5: HELP STRUGGLING STUDENTS

The big idea

By January 2012, the lowest-performing students in each state will receive additional help to accelerate their learning. These students, who are at least two years below grade level in reading, writing, and mathematics, cannot afford to wait for the more systemic, longer-term changes described in the previous sections. They have been neglected for too long. While the recovery funds are designed in large part to stabilize the adult workforce, it is equally if not more important to strengthen and stabilize quality learning environments for our neediest youth. They deserve an immediate boost.

Why action is essential

Despite some islands of excellence and gains in some subjects and grade levels, achievement gaps among children of different races and classes remain huge and tend to grow with additional years of schooling. For example, white students in the 12th grade are, on average, four years ahead of their African-American peers. Barely half of African-American and Latino students graduate from high school, compared to 78 percent of their white counterparts. Less than 10 percent of the incoming freshmen at the most selective colleges come from families in the lower half of income earnings.

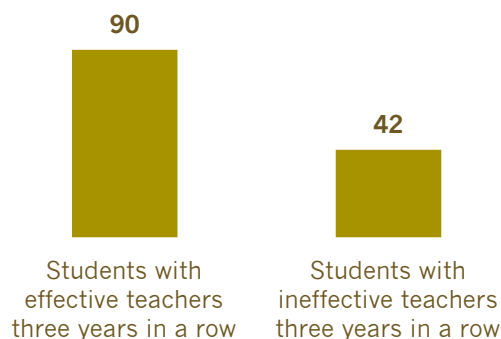
We know, however, that good teaching can overcome these challenges. In Dallas, for instance, students who had three consecutive years of effective teachers improved their mathematics test scores by 21 points. And four years in a row with a top-quartile teacher is enough to close the African-American–white test score gap. The achievement gap, in reality, is an opportunity gap that must be closed.

It's Already Happening

Tennessee is reviewing the distribution of teachers in six urban districts by qualification and experience level, as well as the distribution of effective teachers, using data generated from the state's "value added" longitudinal data system.

A key tenet of the Knowledge Is Power Program (KIPP), one of the most successful public middle school programs in the country, is more and better use of time in school. The students in KIPP's 66 schools spend 60 percent more time in school than their counterparts in traditional schools. Achievement First, the successful 15-school network, has added 50 more days to its school year.

Effective versus Ineffective Teachers: Percentage of Students Passing 7th Grade Math Exams



Source: Sitha Babu and Robert Mendro, "Teacher Accountability: HLM-Based Teacher Effectiveness Indices in the Investigation of Teacher Effects in a State Assessment Program," AERA Annual Meeting, 2003

What governors and state chiefs should do

All students, including the lowest-performing, will benefit from the actions described in the previous sections, which address the U.S. Department of Education's "four assurances" required for states to receive additional State Fiscal Stabilization Fund dollars.

States can use these one-time funds to provide the students who are farthest behind with more targeted and immediate assistance. They cannot afford to wait for all the systemic changes to take effect. States need to find ways to use the recovery funds to pair the highest-performing teachers with the lowest-performing students and provide these students with more time to meet high standards as soon as possible. Specifically, states should:

- **Expand learning opportunities for our highest-need students through a longer school day and year.** For example, Massachusetts' Expanded Learning Time initiative has helped many low-performing schools meet their targets under the federal No Child Left Behind Act by extending learning at least 300 hours for more than 13,500 students.
- **Create a mechanism for districts to establish a "9th grade teaching corps" that provides significant financial incentives to the most effective teachers to work in 9th grade in Title I schools.** One of the most effective ways to raise high school graduation rates is to improve the transition

It's Already Happening

The Guilford County, NC, public schools have seen promising results from the first two years of an incentive-pay program (Mission Possible) that provides one-time recruitment incentives as large as \$10,000 and performance bonuses ranging from \$2,500 to \$5,000 for effective teachers willing to work in the district's lowest-performing schools. Teacher and administrator turnover has decreased, the percentage of schools meeting their targets under the No Child Left Behind Act has increased, and teachers report more positive working conditions. Half of Mission Possible schools had larger increases on state tests than non-Mission Possible schools from 2005–06 to 2006–07.

from 8th to 9th grade. The best teachers, however, now tend to teach 12th grade, electives, and honors courses, often leaving the least effective teachers with the students who need them most.

- **Provide incentives for effective teachers to teach in high-need schools.** Studies show that even using proxy measures of teacher quality, students in schools with high concentrations of low-income students and students of color typically have more inexperienced teachers who are less likely to have a major or minor in the subjects they teach than teachers in low-need schools. States should work with districts to use the one-time funds to provide incentives over a multiyear period to help ensure the neediest students are benefiting from the best teachers.
- **Use Open Educational Resources (OER) to create alternative pathways for students who are behind academically or have special needs.** These digital instructional materials are distributed online. They include online courses and tools carrying a flexible license, such as Creative Commons, which permits sharing, downloading, adaptation, and redistribution. A one-time state investment to develop OER reduces both the cost of learning materials and the recurring costs of their maintenance or replacement. Some states already are using these tools as the basis for course-credit recovery programs, remediation, and acceleration, and a growing number of districts are using them for English language learners and students with learning disabilities.

What district superintendents should do

- **Create a “learning stabilization” program** that puts effective teachers with the best tools in front of the lowest-performing students for more learning time, including summer learning academies and extended days. Pittsburgh is beginning such a program this summer, focused on boosting middle school literacy.
- **Expand schoolwide learning opportunities for our highest-need students through a longer school day and year.** If our most disadvantaged students are going to catch up and achieve at world-class levels, they need more time to get there. The KIPP schools are the best known of many good examples of schools that are providing students with a longer school day and year — and using the change to restructure how current learning time is used — and helping students catch up and, indeed, thrive.

- **Create a “9th grade teaching corps” that provides significant financial incentives to the most effective teachers to work in 9th grade in Title I schools.** One of the most effective ways to raise high school graduation rates is to improve the transition from 8th to 9th grade. Districts must find ways to place the most effective teachers with the students who need them most.
- **Provide incentives for effective teachers to teach in high-need schools.** Districts such as New York City are paying bonuses for the best teachers who move to low-income schools where their talents are needed the most. Other districts should do the same, using the one-time recovery funds to provide incentives over a multiyear period.
- **Increase the stability of the learning environment for the highest-need students.** Districts can negotiate agreements that Title I schools do not have to accept involuntary transfers or lay off teachers based on seniority without regard to quality. Districts such as Chicago and Houston already have similar “anti-bumping” policies in place.
- **Create more flexible credit-recovery programs.** Districts can enable students to participate in credit-recovery programs during the school day rather than after school or in the evenings. This may require forgoing some electives to ensure that students are back on track as fast as possible. An important first step is for districts to perform the kind of comprehensive audits of all high school student transcripts that Washington, DC, recently completed.
- **Measure the results.** Districts should use internal and external evaluations to help develop these projects and measure their effects in real time.

The benefits

Students will benefit from expanded learning time with those who can help them the most: a district’s most effective teachers. Students will be able to catch up and get back on the path for success.

Teachers will be recognized and rewarded for their expertise.

Schools, districts, and states will be able to pilot key mechanisms for improving student learning and identify the most effective investments to increase student achievement.

CONCLUSION

The \$100 billion of ARRA recovery funds provide a once-in-a-generation opportunity for states and school districts to transform their policies and practices — and in the process, create the foundation for significant long-term learning gains for American students. We have no time to lose. Less than one-third of U.S. 4th and 8th grade students are proficient in reading, and less than 40 percent are proficient in mathematics, according to the National Assessment of Educational Progress, “the nation’s report card.” Of equal concern, America’s international standing on many educational measures is mediocre and declining.

With the recovery funds, innovations that have been proven to work in some states and some districts can now be scaled up significantly so that more students benefit from the great teaching and high-performing schools that open doors, create opportunities, and change lives.

But transformation will happen only if state and district leaders are willing to take advantage of this investment opportunity. The forces of inertia are powerful. Many argue that it is impossible to save jobs and transform schools at the same time and that avoiding layoffs must be priority one.

The same arguments have been made about the economy as a whole — that innovation is impossible in a downturn. President Obama has argued otherwise:

“I know there are some who believe we can only handle one challenge at a time. They forget that Lincoln helped lay down the transcontinental railroad, passed the Homestead Act, and created the National Academy of Sciences in the midst of Civil War. Likewise, President Roosevelt didn’t have the luxury of choosing between ending a depression and fighting a war. President Kennedy didn’t have the luxury of choosing between civil rights and sending us to the moon. And we don’t have the luxury of choosing between getting our economy moving now and rebuilding it over the long term.” (President Barack Obama, Remarks to the United States Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, March 10, 2009)

We couldn’t agree more and believe that his inspirational remarks about economic renewal apply just as forcefully to educational renewal. The time for bold action is now.

APPENDIX

Key Funding Streams

Our recommendations are made in the context of the guidance provided by the U.S. Department of Education to states and districts about what American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funds will be available and when, as well as the conditions attached to the spending. A summary follows.

Funding Stream	Dollars	Timeline	Requirements
Stabilization Phase I	\$26.67 billion (67% of \$39.8 billion designated for education)	April 2009, but rolling based on application submission	Governors must submit a basic application committing to state movement on assurances related to: college- and work-ready standards, data systems, teacher effectiveness and distribution, enhanced assessments, and supports and interventions.
Stabilization Phase II	\$13.134 billion (remaining 33% of \$39.8 billion designated for education)	Available between July 1, 2009 and October 1, 2009	Governors must submit a second, more sophisticated application addressing state plans, with metrics, for addressing four mandatory “assurances” over time. The Phase II application will be peer reviewed.

Title 1, Part A	\$10 billion	Half became available at the end of March 2009; the remaining half will be available between July 1, 2009 and October 1, 2009	The Recovery Act does not create new requirements.
IDEA, Part B Grants	\$11.3 billion	Half became available at the end of March 2009; the remaining half will be available between July 1, 2009 and October 1, 2009	The Recovery Act does not create new requirements.
IDEA, Part B – Preschool Grants	\$400 million	Half became available at the end of March 2009; the remaining half will be available between July 1, 2009 and October 1, 2009	The Recovery Act does not create new requirements.
IDEA, Part C	\$500 million	Half became available at the end of March 2009; the remaining half (\$250 million) will be available between July 1, 2009 and October 1, 2009.	The Recovery Act does not create new requirements.
Race to the Top State Incentive Grants	\$4.35 billion	Round 1: Fall 2009; Round 2: Spring 2010	Grants will be competitively awarded to SEAs, based on leading reforms related to the “four assurances,” with specific criteria and priorities to be determined.

Invest in What Works Local Innovation Funds	\$650 million	Fall 2009	Grants will be competitively awarded to districts, school consortia, or partnerships with nonprofits, with a focus on raising student achievement and closing achievement gaps; specific criteria and priorities to be determined.
Statewide Data Systems Funds	\$250 million	Fall 2009	Grants will be competitively awarded based on the IES Data Systems Grants framework, with specific criteria and priorities to be determined.
Title I School Improvement Grants	\$3 billion	Fall 2009	Grants will be awarded by formula based on Title I-A, Section 1003(g), but additional applications may be required.
Teacher Incentive Funds	\$200 million	Fall 2009	Grants will be competitively awarded, with specific criteria and priorities to be determined.

“ Despite resources that are unmatched anywhere in the world, we’ve let our grades slip, our schools crumble, our teacher quality fall short, and other nations outpace us. Let me give you a few statistics. In 8th grade math, we’ve fallen to 9th place. Singapore’s middle schoolers outperform ours three to one. Just a third of our 13- and 14-year-olds can read as well as they should. And year after year, a stubborn gap persists between how well white students are doing compared to their African American and Latino classmates. The relative decline of American education is untenable for our economy, it’s unsustainable for our democracy, it’s unacceptable for our children — and we can’t afford to let it continue.”

— President Barack Obama
Remarks to the United States Hispanic Chamber
of Commerce, March 10, 2009